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ABSTRACT

NewGate, an experimental education program designed for inmates of correctional institutions who have potential for college education, combines pre-college and college level instruction with counseling and pre-release training. Its goal is to motivate prison inmates to prepare for and pursue a college education. To achieve this goal: (1) An institution of higher learning provides regular college classes in a correctional institution. These credit classes are geared to the needs and achievements of the particular inmate populations; (2) A counseling program is developed which works to rebuild inmate self-concepts and to alter the self defeating behavior patterns; and (3) Social and cultural activities, not ordinarily available, are brought into the correctional institution to help rekindle inmate interest for participation in society. Emphasis is placed on the continuation of NewGate support of participants after their release, by continued counseling, and by arranging financial assistance for those who continue their education. (Author/LS)

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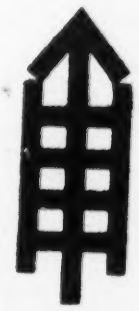

NewGate

A way out of the wasted years

Newgate's Goal:

Motivate Prison Inmates To Prepare For And Pursue A College Education

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POETRY FROM PRISON

Pinnacles and Parapets

When I was just a little boy
I dreamed of a castle tall
All bounded about to keep
enemies out
With a massive grey stone wall.
With pinnacles and parapets
And with towers etched in the sky,
And my mind created a fantasy
For a very small dreamer was I.
And now I am an older man
And I have my grey stone wall,
With a soldier of tin to keep me in,
For a toy I've an iron ball.
With pinnacles and parapets
And with towers etched in the sky,
While my days stretch on toward
eternity
Now a wiser realist am I.
So when you come to visit me
You peek in over my wall.
Your mind won't accept that a
soul could be kept
Where no one can hear its call.
So my parapets you study
With a gentle curiosity.
And you ask me "what's it like in
there?"
And I answer, "wait and see."

—Donald F. Douglas

What is NewGate?

NewGate is an experimental education program designed for inmates of correctional institutions who have potential for college education. It combines pre-college and college level instruction with counseling and pre-release training.

What is Its Goal?

Approximately 500,000 men and women are imprisoned in county, state and Federal correctional institutions in the United States. Many of these men and women have had very limited formal education, but many are capable of achieving a college education. NewGate's goal is to develop educational opportunities commensurate with these inmates' abilities and thereby stimulate their interest in pursuing legitimate careers after release from prison.

How Does NewGate Work to Achieve Its Goal?

First, an institution of higher learning provides regular college classes in a correctional institution. These credit classes are geared to the needs and achievements of the particular inamte populations. In some cases, education levels are sufficient to allow for immediate development of a college curriculum. In others, it is first necessary to develop a curriculum of basic skills which will bring the inmates to the college level.

Second, a counseling program is developed which works to rebuild inmate self-concepts and to alter the self-defeating behavior patterns frequently responsible for their criminal activity. Usually included in the counseling program is pre-release training which helps to prepare inmates for the practical tasks of outside living.

Third, social and cultural activities, not ordinarily available, are brought into the correctional institution to help rekindle inmate interest for participation in society. They are designed as preparation to help inmates adjust to the changing society outside.

Does NewGate Work Only Inside Institutions?

No. One of the most innovative aspects of the NewGate program is that it continues to work with students after they leave the institution. It supports them by continuing to counsel program participants after their release and by arranging financial assistance for those who continue their education.

How Did NewGate Begin?

The original NewGate project was developed at the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem, Oregon, by Dr. Thomas E. Gaddis, author of the Birdman of Alcatraz, in cooperation with the Division of Continuing Education of the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

With primary funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Oregon project is now under the sponsorship of the University of Oregon.

Four additional projects have been funded to date.

They are:

1. The University of Minnesota in cooperation with the Minnesota Reformatory for men at St. Cloud, Minnesota.

2. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Corrections and the Rockview Correctional Institution in cooperation with the Pennsylvania State University.

3. Eastern New Mexico University in cooperation with the Penitentiary of New Mexico.

4. Morehead State University in cooperation with the Ashland Federal Youth Center.

How Does A Typical Project Work?

Because NewGate works both inside and outside correctional institutions, it is fundamentally a two-part program. The inside program, combining education, counseling and cultural activities, offers inmates the chance to participate in college classes while preparing for outside living.

The fundamental operating principle is to bring community people and resources into correctional programming and to develop solid community-based support systems into which inmates can move upon release. The continuation of NewGate support from inside the institution to the outside world is stressed.

The Inside Program

Education

Each project's curriculum is tailored to the various education levels and needs of the selected participants. The curriculum is flexible enough to accomodate the different educational backgrounds of inmates and to grow with the students' increasing educational attainment. Basic liberal arts courses, and special classes emphasizing such necessary study skills as note-taking and library use, are part of the accepted NewGate curriculum.

Counseling and Pre-Release Training Program

All projects provide counseling and pre-release training. They seek to prepare inmates for successful participation in legitimate society outside the institution. Toward this end, NewGate recognizes the value of releasing inmates into a situation where other NewGate students have successfully established themselves in the community.

In Oregon, group therapy and individual counseling have become mainstays of the project. Frequently, released students continue to meet with the groups on the outside.

In Minnesota, a group dynamics program called Guided Group Interaction combines group therapy with the development of a peer-group culture. Participation in these groups is a requirement for admission to the Minnesota project, and the groups are maintained indefinitely on the outside.

The Pre-Release Training Program helps inmates prepare for the practical tasks of outside living. Instruction in such basics as how to apply for a job, personal development and grooming is provided as well as a general orientation to the towns and campuses where inmates will make their homes upon release.

Campus Activities in Prison

Augmenting both the education and counseling programs are activities which are aimed at stimulating a campus environment. Lectures, films, tapes, debates, poetry readings and musical groups as well as inmate-initiated newsletters and cultural clubs are encouraged.

Outside Program

NewGate tries to make the difficult transition from institution to outside world as smooth as possible. Everything the NewGate staff can learn about the inmate is brought to bear on his release plans. His needs are assessed and discussed prior to his discharge and the staff then tries to develop an outside program which will satisfy these needs.

Financial Assistance

Nearly every student requires some financial assistance, especially if he plans to continue his education. Usually grants, scholarships or loans are available from the university he will attend. But if this assistance is unavailable or insufficient, the project contributes directly.

Since most students are released only with the clothes they are wearing and a few dollars spending money, NewGate usually arranges for housing, clothing and miscellaneous living expenses. If the student is not going to school this assistance is temporary until he is employed. When the student continues in school, tuition, books, supplies and incidental educational expenses are arranged.

The student is expected to contribute where possible from his own earnings. Most students' financial needs are met through a combination of aid from the university, the NewGate project and the students' own contribution.

Supportive Services After Release

As critical as the released inmate's financial needs are, even more pressing are the problems created by his need to readjust to society and the new experience of campus living.

During the first few months after release even common day to day problems can be overwhelming to a student who has been behind bars for several years. The NewGate staff works to assist students with these problems by remaining in close personal contact and by helping the student through such trying situations as school registration, apartment hunting, and shopping.

Ongoing counseling is provided upon release, and the counselor-student relationship established inside the institution is continued. Where necessary, professional psychological or medical help is made available.

NewGate recognizes that the student's need for personal support never stops. At the same time it recognizes that project staff can provide only limited assistance over a relatively short period of time. Therefore, NewGate staff work to involve the students in campus and community activities not connected with the project in order to build greater self-reliance.

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